Fact Sheet

dna

Defense Nuclear Agency
Public Affairs Office
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Subject: Nuclear Test Personnel Review (NTPR)

Since 1978, the Defense Nuclear Agency (DNA) has been conducting a major program to identify the approximately 200,000 Department of Defense (DoD) military and civilian personnel who participated in some 235 nuclear tests that were conducted during the atmospheric test series, primarily in Nevada and the Pacific Ocean. This NTPR program has involved intensive, high priority research of the broadest scope. Managed by a special office at DNA that is dedicated to identifying all such veterans and providing them with the best available estimates of radiation exposure for each, program personnel have compiled a roster of DoD personnel involved in the atmospheric nuclear tests. In addition, program personnel have developed a history of each atmospheric nuclear event that involved DoD participants, collected and analyzed all recorded dosimetry, and provided calculated doses in cases where recorded doses are unavailable or are incomplete. The program has also supported studies to ascertain whether adverse health effects are being experienced by test veterans that could be attributed to the tests.

An extensive public outreach program has been conducted to insure maximum interface with the thousands of test participants, to share with them the vast amount of data that has been collected on their behalf, and to advise them of the specifics of their individual involvement and radiation exposure history insofar as can be estimated from available records. Over 100 archives nationwide have been researched for relevant information; a well organized and easily accessed Coordination and Information Center has been established in Las Vegas, Nevada; over 40 historical volumes and more than 25 analytical reports have been developed to provide details of each test and operation; and a reading room has been established at DNA Headquarters to assist in making these data available to the public. All NTPR reports also have been placed in libraries throughout the country as well as at Veterans Administration (VA) offices to allow ready access to these important documents. To date, over 60,000 participants or their representatives have made personal contact with the program and have received a letter containing all the information that the NTPR has located on their participation. These contacts also have been followed up with personal letters, which provide the latest information and current important developments.

A major objective of the program is to assist veterans in obtaining information for their VA claims regarding their exposure to ionizing radiation at atmospheric nuclear tests. DNA has supported and continues to sponsor several important studies conducted by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to determine whether there is an unusually high incidence of mortality among nuclear test participants.

Under the mandates of Public Laws 98-542 and 100-321, DNA continues to identify nuclear test participants, their radiation risk activities, and the resultant radiation doses, thereby facilitating the health care and/or compensation of veterans as authorized by these laws. The VA advises that free medical examinations are available at VA facilities to any former military test participant, as well as medical care for conditions that the VA considers to be related to exposure to ionizing radiation. For the relatively few individuals who received doses in excess of today's Federal guidance (less than one percent of all participants), DNA has established personal contact with each for which an address could be found and encouraged them to undergo this examination. No adverse health effects attributable to radiation exposure have been detected among this unique higher-dose group of veterans.

Specific Accomplishments/Findings

DNA continues to expand upon its work to research the many important issues surrounding the nation's atmospheric nuclear test program. To date:

- Over 200,000 test participants have been identified and researched as to their specific involvement and their recorded radiation exposure.

- Extensive dose reconstruction methodologies, developed to provide a comprehensive analysis of both external dose and internal dose commitment, have been published in the *Federal Register* and reviewed by many of the country's leading experts. These methodologies have been applied to most participating units as well as to individual circumstances of exposure, to determine total doses to participating veterans.

- Research indicates that doses to most DoD personnel were quite low, averaging about 0.625 rem. This is one-eighth the current Federal Guideline for allowable dose to radiation workers, which permits up to 5 rem per year. Even at the currently allowable dose, there is a very low risk of causing any type of radiogenic disease above that normally expected in the general population exposed to background levels of radiation.

- Hundreds of thousands of pages of data have been recovered and researched, including over a thousand basic test reports, many of which had to be declassified, reprinted, and indexed for public use.

- Original dosimetry source documents have been and are still being re-examined for accuracy and completeness. Individual involvement at the tests is continually researched to insure that all dose potential has been documented and considered.

- At DNA's request, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) conducted an extensive study of mortality of more than 46,000 nuclear test participants. The study, entitled "Mortality of Nuclear Weapons Test Participants," found " ...no consistent evidence of increased deaths from cancer or any other diseases overall." An additional NAS study on mortality of the 42,000 participants at CROSSROADS is now being conducted and will provide, in about four years, scientific information on deaths due to radiogenic disease in this large population. To ensure the most accurate interpretation of recorded doses as it may relate to health effects, the NAS

also is studying the accuracy of film badge dosimetry. This evaluation of personnel film badges will be finished in about one year.

DNA is dedicated to provide all nuclear test veterans with a responsive, helpful program of historical research, dose determination, and individual support to ensure that each veteran fully understands his or her involvement in atmospheric nuclear tests. Individual dose reconstructions, as noted above, are based on evaluations of available records. Any test participant who can provide copies of personal records is invited to send them to DNA if it appears that his or her dose reconstruction is based on incomplete records. Further inquiries can be addressed to Defense Nuclear Agency (ATTN: RARP/NTPR), 6801 Telegraph Road, Alexandria, Virginia 22310-3398, or one may call 1-800-462-3683. In Virginia, call (collect) 703-285-5610.